

HOW TO WRITE A SATIRE

Definitions:

SATIRE — A technique that exposes human weaknesses or social evils. Satire may use exaggeration, wit, irony, or humor to make its point. The satirist may adopt a tone ranging from good natured humor to biting ridicule or scorn. Satire may serve to entertain, to instruct, or to reform or bring about action.

A. **Caricature** — A type of satire that gives a humorous picture that exaggerates or distorts certain qualities of a person in order to create a ridiculous effect. In literature caricature is frequently associated with satire or parody. Its true intent is not to criticize just one individual but rather to ridicule a societal group or a social practice. The ultimate aim of caricature is to ridicule in order to correct a weakness.

B. **Parody** — A lesser type of satire that is a humorous imitation of the style, characters, or subject matter of serious writing. Parody is a subcategory of satire. Parody is designed to ridicule a work or to point up or exaggerate its characteristics.

Steps in Writing Satire:

1. Use a reasonable tone. Don't overuse highly connotative words, especially words that are not pc (politically correct). You want satire, not vituperative [look it up if you don't know the meaning]. Satire usually states or implies some standard for ideal human behavior. The satirist hopes that because of the satire, people will look at themselves in a new light and change their foolish ways. The satirist's job is to point out that foolishness.
2. Start realistically, then begin accelerating toward the satire. Gradually increase the exaggeration or understatement until the reader comes to the realization at one particular point that the audience/reader realizes that the work is a satire.
 - Intro (1-2 paragraphs at most) - Introduces topic, point of view, reasonable tone.
 - Bridge to satire (2-3 paragraphs) Gradually (step by step, sentence by sentence) begin to incorporate the satiric devices so the reader begins to wonder if what you are saying is real, valid, or not, until you finally reach a point where the satire is intuitively obvious to even the most dense person.
 - Body (length determined by what you want to say). Fully develops satire uses the following devices.
 - Conclusion (1-2 paragraphs) - Drives home the point. Clearly states purpose of the satire.
3. Rely upon devices such as the following to develop the satire:
 - Irony — all three types (verbal, situational, and dramatic)
 - Inversions
 - Exaggeration
 - Hyperbole (great exaggeration)
 - Understatement
 - Juxtaposition
 - Puns and other word plays
 - Unexpected twists
 - Use of a persona (a fictional narrator or speaker through whom the author/poet speaks)
4. Common forms of a satire:
 - Letters
 - Short stories
 - Lists (Letterman's Top Ten")
 - Poems
 - Essays
 - Editorial columns
 - Cartoons
 - Comic Skits
 - Musical lyrics
 - Dance



Sometimes there's a very fine LEGAL line between satire and libel/slander. Make sure you are on the satire side.